

AMSS 37<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL CONFERENCE

“Crossing Boundaries: Mobilizing Faith, Diversity and Dialogue”

Hosted By:  
The Harvard Divinity School  
Harvard University, Cambridge, MA  
October 24 – 25. 2008

---

**ABSTRACT**

“Towards a Dawn of Knitting an Inter-Cultural Dialogue  
with Islam in the Canadian Media”

By: Aliaa Dakroury, Ph.D  
(Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada)

Although multiple sites of media, including theatrical or cinematic performances highlight Muslim identities, this paper only examines the representation of Muslim identities as outlined in the 2007 television sitcom *Little Mosque on the Prairie*. This presentation will shed light on how key historical and contemporary moments, and social relations impact the media. In 2007, the Canadian Broadcasting Cooperation (CBC) premiered its new sitcom *Little Mosque on the Prairie*: the first comedy portraying and discussing Islam, its followers, practices, behaviors, and everyday life since September 11. When asked about what she hopes to accomplish in her sitcom, the script writer, and CBC former producer, Zarqa Nawaz, stated that: “There is a lot of misunderstanding about Islam, and its followers. Through the comedy of *Little Mosque on the Prairie*, I hope a little light can be shed.” This paper argues that airing such a controversial and sensitive topic in a public broadcasting channel is certainly a serious Canadian attempt to address the public’s knowledge about Islam and Muslims, and to increase its knowledge about “*other*” cultural frameworks. Following September 11, Muslims around the world became victims of misrepresentation in both real life and the media, as they were portrayed as extremists, fundamentalists, and sometimes, terrorists. This presentation argues that CBC’s production is a conscious effort to inform the general non-Muslim Canadians that, as stated by the script writer, “... although different, we are all surprisingly similar when it comes to family, love, the generation gap and our attempts to balance our secular and religious lives.” This paper is aimed to critically analyze, through discourse content analysis, the first eight sitcoms, as well as the earlier feedback received pertaining to the airing of this comedy on CBC.